

REFORM

ANGLE ON

During the past month, the CRFPST celebrated its first one hundred days in operation. Although it has been a short time, the backlog of RFPs has been largely dealt with. Now we are meeting with teams who are in a much earlier stage of RFP preparation. This allows acquisition streamlining to be built in from the start, thereby avoiding scrap and rework. Although we are glad to be earlier in the process, we are even more eager to get involved with later pieces: source selection and post-contract award.

Source Selection

Several streamlined RFPs are entering or getting close to source selection. We will work with selected programs to discover how well the initiatives work. For the past few months, many ideas have been forwarded. We in the CRFPST have encouraged program managers to be experimental in making things faster, better and cheaper. Now, we want to help deal with unexpected difficulties which arise in the interest of reform. For example, during source selection team members may have difficulty adjusting to a non-checklist mentality. No longer will the offerors be parroting back our SOW. They will be developing their own SOW based on the SOO and other parts of the RFP. Evaluators must use their judgment and experience to evaluate proposals against standards and program objectives.

Post-award support

The fruits of acquisition reform will become more evident as more streamlined contracts are awarded and executed. For those programs, such as Joint Direct Attack Munitions, where Affordability is an objective, the benefits of streamlining are easily quantified. Already, millions of taxpayer dollars have been saved on the JDAM pilot program. The more recently award packages still have a story to unfold. In the CRFPST, we plan to capture and evaluate the results of these programs to learn and share which ideas work best.

Industry is our partner.

Please continue to solicit industry feedback to streamlined RFPs. After all, the contractors are our customers for an RFP. You might even want to give them a copy of this newsletter and other acquisition reform information

Deskbook connection

Many of you have asked what our plans for putting Angle on Reform in the Air Force Acquisition Model or Deskbook are. So far, the newsletter has not been on either. One reason is the lessons learned are still fluid. As discussed above, the results will start showing in 96. Furthermore, policy was nonexistent in Aug. and is beginning to be established. Hence, your editor is making a New Year's resolution to get excerpts of the newsletter on Deskbook!

Inside This Newsletter

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LESSON LEARNED: Process of defining objectives as valuable as SOO itself

Discussion: The process of preparing a Statement of Objectives (SOO) clarifies what is most important to the program. The critical objectives are then understood by all team members and the contractors. The discussion to build a SOO allows all functional representatives buy-in to the objectives. Even in the few programs which have a requirement for a Statement of Work, it is still advisable to go through a SOO development process to clearly define the solicitation objectives.

OPR: LTC Stratton x4912

LESSON LEARNED: White papers, newsletter should not be construed as policy

Discussion: The Centralized Request for Proposal Support Team (CRFPST) occasionally issues white papers on acquisition reform topics, primarily to disseminate timely information to our members and the RFPSOs. Similarly, the Angle on Reform provides insight to developing acquisition reform processes. It should be specifically noted that these documents are generated within the CRFPST and are not therefore to be construed as official Command policy. They are for internal use by the team in order to facilitate consistency in our reviews. Should individual topics merit further development into formal policy, the appropriate command focal point will be contacted and the process initiated.

OPR: Dan Fulmer x4922

ISSUE: Streamlined RFP requires new approach to source selection

Discussion: When a Request for Proposal (RFP) undergoes significant change to incorporate the tenets of acquisition reform, the program team may be ill-prepared for dealing with the resulting source selection. Why? The functional specialists may be looking for the old style proposal and not find the usual checklist topics. This illustrates how early involvement applies internally within a program and not only to industry. Communication is critical for everyone who has an involvement.

Recommendation: Program team explicitly discuss the source selection before RFP release to ensure awareness. CRFPST can assist the RFPSO's in preparing for proposal evaluation.

OPR: Janet Miller ext 4924

BEST PRACTICE: Oral proposals can shorten time for source selection on services

Discussion: An experimental technique for selecting the best value contractor is to perform the technical part of the evaluation based on an oral presentation. As a precursor to the

presentations, the offerors submit written past performance and cost efficiency data. The oral proposal itself is to allow the contractor's program team to reveal its depth of knowledge and capability to meet the objectives. The oral presentation includes probing questions from the Air Force Source Selection Authority and his/her support. These serve to validate the contractor's written material. The details of the contract are prepared after award, which should occur without discussions. Although a waiver AFFARS Appendix BB is required to employ oral proposals, this technique holds much promise. Oral proposals can reduce cycle times by eliminating costly, non-discriminating portions of proposals. Also, do not confuse this with an oral introduction to the proposal to replace the executive overview volume. The latter is limited to a walk through the proposal for ease of evaluation. It is also a good idea, but a separate topic.

Idea Source: Central Theater Processing Program Team

OPR: LTC Melusen ext 4910

LESSON LEARNED: Acq. reform is not an excuse for abdication of responsibility

Discussion: A few program team members have arbitrarily removed requirements from RFPs in the name of streamlining. An example is deleting the preservation and packaging requirements from a military unique environment. Although streamlining will remove unnecessary requirements, acting without understanding the impact of the action is not consistent with acquisition reform. The program team must think through the requirements and apply those which make sense, without being overly restrictive. In the example case of packaging, streamlining may mean selecting performance parameters to describe the desert environment.

OPR: Mel Arnold ext 4936

LESSON LEARNED: RFP guidance interpreted as binding

Discussion: When materiel is inserted in an RFP and labeled as "for guidance only", the program team frequently believes they are inviting contractors to suggest alternatives. However, feedback from industry indicates the guidance documents are understood to be what the program team prefers or expects to see. Therefore, the contractors are reluctant to offer innovation. Furthermore, if it is in the RFP, the bidders must expend resources to somehow respond to it.

Recommendation: Put guidance documents in technical library.

BEST PRACTICE: Electronic Data Access can be an objective in SOO

Discussion: Use of electronic media is the preferred method of data delivery and access. The draft (10/11/95) of DoDI 5000.2, Part 4, specifically talks to requiring contractors to integrate their technical information systems and processes in digital form (para 4.3.3.3 and 4.4.2).

CDRL items are kept to a minimum when the Program Office places heavy reliance on the contractor's electronically available databases. Having access to the contractor's databases allows continuous updates, not just periodic reports.

OPR: Jane Webb ext 4937

LESSON LEARNED: Training indispensable

Discussion: Roadshow II training is essential to creating an open-minded environment and a general understanding of the tenets of Acquisition Reform.

ISSUE: IMPs are being used contrary to their intended purpose.

Discussion: An Integrated Master Plan (IMP) is an event based plan depicting the overall structure of the program to aid in managing risk. It defines accomplishments and exit criteria for each event. Instead, program offices are requesting offerors provide IMPs that are merely collections of (1) detailed process descriptions or (2) functional plans (e.g., software development plans, configuration management plans, logistics support plans) that were historically requested as separate documents for the source selection. Process descriptions and functional plans, though they may be useful in some applications to manage appropriate risk, do not constitute an IMP. Nor do they provide the program team with the visibility to evaluate how well the offeror has planned and understands the complexity of the overall program during source selection. Referring to these documents as "IMPs" creates confusion among program offices and offerors.

Recommendations:

If program teams can identify key objectives and then only ask for narratives tied to these key objectives, the need for narratives and plans for non key objectives should be eliminated. This sends an unambiguous message to offerors as to what is a discriminating factor for the program.

OPR: Greg Colbert ext 4934

ISSUE: Program Offices are misinterpreting current IMP/IMS guidance.

Discussion: The misinterpretation is that the IMS should be revised after contract award to make it a more detailed document. This is not the intent of the guidance. Rather, the IMS submitted with the proposal should be prepared at the level of detail necessary for contract execution and day-to-day management. The IMS may need to be revised during contract execution to accommodate program changes, but not merely to add more detail.

Impact: Programs are improperly using the IMS. In many cases, they are asking for too much detail in IMS revisions.

Recommendations: Program Offices should ask for IMSs to be submitted with the proposal prepared at a level of detail they judge is appropriate for management of the program. Level of detail should be commensurate with risk, which may vary by WBS element. Additional detail should not be requested after contract award. Furthermore, current IMP/IMS guidance should be revised to clarify this point.

ISSUE: We refer to the “chronological” order in the IMP in the Intro package we hand out.

Impact: This creates confusion as the instructions also say the IMP is not time oriented.

Recommendations: Program offices should be advised that the IMP is not time related and that the wording in our guidance will be clarified to indicate the IMP should address the interdependency of events.

BEST PRACTICE: Build rapport between RFPSO and Program Offices

Discussion: We have a few suggestions to enable us to act more as a team contributor, as opposed to another obstacle.

Augmentee teams are now getting caught up on their work load. We are able to contact the program offices before they even begin developing RFPs, instead of us “weighing in” after they have expended a lot of effort. We meet with the program offices early on and offer our assistance,. When we have initial contact meetings, we’ve found it beneficial to give our program office background so the program office personnel realize that we have recently worked in program offices, and that we fully understand the pressures they are under to release their RFPs on time.

We emphasize that it is part of our responsibility to ensure that the program offices at our Center do not get in trouble by doing things the old way, but instead can show that the cultural change is taking place.

We also encourage the program office to forward us the draft RFP and acquisition planning documentation as it is being developed. We can provide feedback and resolve any key issues before the CRFPST meeting.

By showing the program offices that we are part of their team and that we want to provide them assistance, we can reduce the “us -vs- them” perception that program offices may have of our organization.

Idea Source: ESC Augmentee

Examples of SOO Traceability

If a key objective is “affordability” then:

- the SOO should so indicate
- section L should indicate the need for IMP criteria that show how “affordability” is an element of the design or COTS selection process
- section M should indicate “affordability” as an area or factor
- the IMP should contain criteria that could only be available through a design cost or affordability trade study (saying “a trade study will be performed” is inadequate)

If a key objective is “interoperability” then:

- the SOO should so indicate
- section L should indicate the need for IMP criteria that show how “interoperability” is an element of the design process e.g. interface control documentation and ICWG membership.
- section M should indicate interoperability is an area or factor
- the IMP should contain criteria that could only be available through a valid ICWG process e.g. signed Interface Control Documents) ICDs at appropriate events.

Plans requested in the RFP for other areas or factors not directly tied to a key objective may represent a “business as usual” approach and should be carefully scrubbed to establish the ‘plan’ will be a true discriminator in the source selection. Note the above examples would more readily apply to product rather than service contracts.

Per several requests we have started an acronym listing for your reference:

ACRONYMS

AFFARs	Air Force Federal Acquisition Regulation
CDRL	Contract Data Requirements List
COTS	Contractor Off The Shelf
CRFPST	Centralized Request For Proposal Support Team
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
ESC	Electronic Systems Center (Hanscom Air Force Base)
ICD	Interface Control Document
ICWG	Interface Control Working Group
IMP	Integrated Master Plan
IMS	Integrated Master Schedule
RFP	Request For Proposal
RFPSOs	Request For Proposal Support Offices
SOO	Statement of Objectives

SOW

Statement of Work

Please take a moment to give us some feedback. Send an electronic response to webbmj@c17mis.wpafb.af.mil

Or a hard copy can be sent to:

CRFPST - Attn: Jane Webb
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Did you read the CRFPST newsletter?

No, no time to read it

No, not relevant to my work

Yes, read most or all

Other _____

Was it easy to read?

No, insufficient background

No, keep it shorter

Yes

Other _____

Was it useful?

Yes

No

Comments?